



NANAIMO LADYSMITH
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUSINESS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING
INFORMATION SHEET**

DATE: October 11, 2023
TO: Business Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
Pete Sabo, Executive Director Planning & Operations
Paul Kingsbury, Operations Manager
SUBJECT: Vandalism Report

Background:

Vandalism or damage caused by willful behaviour to Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS) Facilities is currently guided by AP 527 – Anti-Vandalism (the AP). The AP indicates annual reporting to the Board or more often as circumstances require.

This report is intended to provide an update on facilities' activities related to the AP. This report discusses vandalism from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023.

The Business Committee was previously updated in February of 2023.

Overview:

The 2022/2023 school year started (July 1, 2022) with multiple vandalism events during the summer break. The vandalism occurred at two schools in particular, John Barsby Secondary and Quarterway Elementary.

Total vandalism cost in 2022/23 was \$79,614 (a decrease from \$108,205 in 21/22). Most of the total vandalism took place in July – Sept with \$40,578 (55%) in those three months. In previous years vandalism costs were not adjusted for inflation and in 2022/23 labour costs rose.

It is felt that initiatives including exterior cameras and increased security patrols at key schools contributed to the decline in year-over-year vandalism costs despite the costly start to the summer.

Interior vs Exterior Vandalism:

This year, because of presentations to the Business Committee, facilities tracked interior vs. exterior vandalism. During the 2022/2023 school year, 10% of reported vandalism costs were interior. The 10% included interior damage made during a single break-in event over the summer at John Barsby Secondary.

When asked (via a survey) custodians reported about five minutes per day per custodian (on average) spent cleaning up interior vandalism. Janitorial time is not included in this report's totals. That amount seems insignificant until one considers the total cost of five minutes per janitor is approximately \$25,000 per year. This is the first year this question was asked of custodians and is likely a historic constant which was never quantified.

Updates on Projects from Previous Report:

Security Cameras (exterior) are operating at the following locations:

- Brechin Elementary
- Dover Bay Secondary
- Ecole Hammond Bay
- Ecole Quarterway
- Facilities Yard
- Fairview School
- Georgia Avenue School
- John Barsby Secondary
- NDSS high vandalism areas
- Wellington Secondary

Security Cameras (interior) are operating at the following locations:

- Dover Bay Secondary
- NDSS
- Wellington Secondary

In accordance with the School Act section 74.01, the board is to review the efficacy of the cameras on an annual basis. This report constitutes the District's evaluation. NLPS staff and the RCMP agree that the cameras continue to increase the safety of individuals, individuals' property, and school property.

Examples include:

- Identifying taggers.
- Attributing fires to arson and identifying arsonists.
- Identifying thieves.
- Identifying drug users on school grounds.
- Identifying illegal dumping on school grounds.
- Reviewing physical assaults.
- Identifying illegal dumping

Each of the facilities with cameras indicated above has benefitted from at least one and often several of the points listed above.

While it is difficult to quantify exactly how much of the reduction in vandalism costs is directly attributable to the presence of security cameras, the preventative benefit is an important consideration.

The District continues to plan for and install security cameras.

Community Safety Unit:

The District has had success working with the Community Safety Unit in the downtown core. The two organizations worked together to clear and fence district property where transients had broken in and set up camp. The District has called upon the CSU on several occasions to evict intractable transients when district personnel were unable to do so. The District hopes to continue this strong partnership.

Fire at Wellington:

Transient activity in the Wellington band room's alcove resulted in a fire to the building, causing extensive damage. The event highlighted the importance of restricting access to sheltered areas in the district. Facilities have now identified approximately a dozen covered spaces that are used for sheltering or drug and alcohol use. Facilities continue to consider physical barriers as well as automatic alerts through video monitoring for these areas.

Discussion:

Vandalism takes many forms including (but not limited to) building damage, graffiti, window breakage, grounds destruction, theft, building systems damage, cleanup following overnight homeless occupation as well as 'interior' vandalism.

Initiatives in place to limit vandalism:

- Graffiti removal program - graffiti is removed immediately and a database of photos is maintained.
- Anti-vandalism coatings – on signage, murals, etc.
- Anti-climber protection - reduce access to roofs where identified.
- Seismic Film installed on inside of all windows – assists in vandalism clean up, and seismic response.
- Participation/coordination with stakeholders (schools, Parks and Recreation, Bylaw, etc.)
- Video, pictures, and data available to the RCMP and key stakeholders (as identified periodically).
- Consideration of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles.
- Engage residents surrounding schools as required or requested.
- Restoration activity is tracked, cost, and provided as requested.

While not vandalism, other initiatives to reduce unwanted behaviours around schools include:

- Transients and after-hours groups asked to leave properties and confirmed to leave by Security/NLPS staff.
- RCMP or Community Safety Unit called as required to move individuals along.
- NLPS Emergency Caretaker responds daily to sites of concern prior to school start-up.
- Security patrols increased overnight at areas that have been targeted by vandals.

New initiatives include:

- Coordination with the City of Nanaimo's Community Safety Unit.
- Review of areas frequented by transients.
- Tracking and reporting of internal vandalism.
- Fulsome use of video systems for both active and passive measures.

Trespass Issues:

- NLPS has concerns with respect to drug use and transients on school property.
 - 2022/2023 saw an increase in drug use on property. This was seen through:
 - Increase in drugs and drug paraphernalia found on school sites.
 - Video footage showing drug users using and loitering on district property.
 - NLPS has modified security patrols to target hot spots with positive results.
 - NLPS doubled the early morning patrols of district property at the end of the 22/23 school year.
 - Most of the transient population respects school property, but an increasingly transient population leads to an increased total number of transients who use drugs at district schools and facilities.
 - Removal of drug paraphernalia (e.g. needles, baggies) as well as human by-products is a continuing problem.
- NLPS assigns one FTE position to support Schools with cleanup.
 - Together with supplemental funding the cost to NLPS is approximately \$100,000 per year, which is not included in the yearly vandalism costs.
- NLPS continues to see success at Ecole Pauline Haarer. The City of Nanaimo and NLPS share the cost of a guard at the school before and during school days and extra patrols on non-school days. The guard's presence greatly reduces transient activity and helps ensure a safer and healthier school environment.

It should be noted that there are no specific vandalism budgets, and all vandalism costs are covered by the affected department. Vandalism costs directly represent less funding spent in the classroom.

Conclusion:

Staff continue to be guided by the AP – “Develop, recommend and maintain anti-vandalism and communication strategies that are both preventative and reactive”. Reports will continue to be presented to the Business Committee annually targeting October.

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Yearly vandalism costs
- Appendix B: Detail by school (attached)
- Appendix C: Summary reports (2)
- Appendix D: Interior vs exterior vandalism costs
- Appendix E: Yearly Vandalism Costs Graph